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Letter dated 23 March 2005 from the representatives of Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

We, the undersigned, the Permanent Representative and the Chargé d'affaires a.i., present our compliments to the President of the Security Council and, with reference to the meeting held by the Syrian-Lebanese Higher Council in Damascus on 7 March 2005, have the honour to transmit to you the text of the closing statement.

We should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ibrahim **Assaf**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
Permanent Mission of the Lebanese Republic

(*Signed*) Fayssal **Mekdad**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic

05-29335 (E) 040405 040405

Annex to the letter dated 23 March 2005 from the representatives of Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Joint statement from the meeting of the Syrian-Lebanese Higher Council

Damascus, 7 March 2005

At the invitation of Mr. Bashar Al-Asad, President of the Syrian Arab Republic, General Emile Lahoud, President of the Lebanese Republic, visited the Syrian Arab Republic at the head of an official delegation. During this visit, a meeting of the Syrian-Lebanese Higher Council, attended by its secretary-general Mr. Nasri Khouri, was held under the chairmanship of Presidents Al-Asad and Lahoud.

Both sides asserted that, in these difficult circumstances and in view of the challenges facing the two countries, this meeting affirmed the determination of both States to widen further the path of cooperation and coordination between them and follow up with transparency and precision the implementation of the Treaty and Agreements signed in that context, in such a manner as to achieve the joint interest of the two countries. Both sides indicated their firm resolve to repair any damage to that path within the framework of the joint agencies and institutions established under the Treaty, which remains the only proper legal framework for dealing with difficulties and obstacles and for developing ideas concerning the future prospects for these fraternal relations that should be translated into reality by way of measures, projects and attitudes that reflect the historic, grass-roots, social, economic, cultural and political dimensions of those relations.

Each side confirmed its country's commitment to the Taif Agreement and its mechanisms, to the Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination and to the agreements arising out of the latter. They also renewed their commitment to their well-established joint strategic positions in countering present and future challenges, together with their commitment to seek the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, the principle of land for peace and their mutual respect for all resolutions of international legitimacy, including resolution 1559 (2004). They stressed the need for implementation of those resolutions without selectivity or double standards.

The gathering then moved on to a discussion of the agenda proposed by the secretary-general of the Syrian-Lebanese Higher Council on the basis of the report which he presented. In the light of the discussion, it was decided as follows:

1. On the basis of the provisions of the Taif Agreement and article 4 of the Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination signed on 22 June 1991 between the two countries, as well as on the basis of its commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and respect for the resolutions of international legitimacy, the Council has decided as follows:

(a) To withdraw the Syrian Arab forces stationed in Lebanon to the Bekaa region and the entrance to the Western Bekaa at Dahr al-Baydar to as far as the Hammana-Mudayrij-Ayn Dara line before the end of March 2005;

(b) To assign to the Joint Military Committee the task of drawing up, within a maximum period of one month from the date of the withdrawal of the Syrian forces to the Bekaa region in accordance with subparagraph (a), an agreement determining both the size and the period of stay of the Syrian forces present in the above-mentioned regions, as well as the relationship of those forces with the Lebanese State authorities in the locations where they are present;

(c) At the end of the agreed period of stay of the Syrian forces present pursuant to subparagraph (b), the Syrian and Lebanese Governments shall agree on completion of the withdrawal of the remaining Syrian Arab forces.

2. On the basis of the provisions of article 6 of the Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination, the Council has decided:

(a) To call on the Follow-Up and Coordination Commission to meet as soon as possible under the co-chairmanship of the two prime ministers in order to follow up the work of all joint ministerial committees, as well as examine and approve all matters implemented during the previous stage, such meetings to be periodically convened every six months;

(b) To call on the Defence and Security Affairs Committee to meet as soon as possible in order to reconstitute the two defence and security committees, the two military follow-up and security follow-up committees and the two joint technical committees provided for in the Defence and Security Agreement, as well as draw up implementing programmes for the said Agreement, such meetings to be periodically convened every three months;

(c) To call on the Foreign Affairs Committee to meet as soon as possible in order to constitute a joint follow-up committee and formulate a joint action programme to meet the present challenges, such meetings to be convened periodically every two months;

(d) To call on all other joint ministerial committees, in particular the Economic and Social Committee, to follow up and, where necessary, step up their periodic meetings in order to accelerate implementation of the Agreements signed and the decisions taken in connection with the operation of a series of joint projects